

Take On a Bigger Role With Flu Vaccines in 2021-2022

It'll be all hands on deck for **flu vaccines in 2021-2022**...as COVID-19 continues and experts warn of a possible severe flu season.

One concern is that the low number of flu cases last season may lessen immunity...and lead to increased severity this year.

You can do a lot to help. In fact, federal guidance now authorizes qualified techs to ADMINISTER adult flu vaccines.

Timing. Encourage patients to get a flu vaccine now...but continue to offer as long as flu is circulating.

CDC now recommends against giving a flu vaccine to most patients in July and August...due to potential waning immunity. But don't dispense a flu "booster" regardless of when patients got this year's vaccine.

Vaccines. Be aware, all flu vaccines will be quadrivalent...with two updated influenza A strains and the same two B strains as last year.

Continue to dispense any product that's appropriate for your patient's age and health status.

For example, *Fluad* or *Fluzone High-Dose* is specifically approved for patients 65 and older. Or if you stock intranasal *FluMist*, it's an option for healthy, nonpregnant patients age 2 through 49.

Double-check that you're selecting the intended vaccine from your computer and fridge. It can be easy to mistake *Fluarix*...*Flucelvax*...*FluLaval*...*Fluzone*...*Fluzone High-Dose*...etc.

Keep options straight with our chart, Flu Vaccines for 2021-22.

Effectiveness. Patients will hear that flu vaccines are only 40% to 60% effective...versus about 90% for mRNA COVID-19 vaccines.

But these comparisons aren't apples to apples.

It's partly because each flu season is different...and we're still learning about COVID-19 vaccine effectiveness over time.

Bring in your pharmacist to share the big picture...COVID-19 and flu vaccines significantly reduce risk of severe illness, hospitalization, and death. Urge getting BOTH vaccinations to protect against each virus.

Other immunizations. Help patients catch up on other needed vaccines (COVID-19, pneumococcal, Tdap, etc). These can be administered at the same visit...but in different arms, if possible.

Brush up on vaccine storage, billing, and more with our technician tutorial, *The Basics of Immunization and Vaccines*. And look into our PTU Elite: Immunizations program for training on administration.

Key References:

- MMWR Recomm Rep 2021;70(5):1-28
- www.cdc.gov/flu/season/faq-flu-season-2021-2022.htm (9-24-21)
- www.cdc.gov/flu/vaccines-work/vaccineeffect.htm (9-24-21)
- JAMA 2021;326(10):899-900

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